Visit of WTO Chief to New Delhi

1053. SHRI CM. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the World Trade Organization Chief Mr. Mike Moore had paid visit to New Delhi in January this year;

(b) if so, what was the purpose of his visit; and

(c) the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (b) Yes, Sir. Mr. Mike Moore, Director General, World Trade Organisation (DG, WTO), on his visit to New Delhi during January, 2000 to attend the Partnership Summit-2000 organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry, took the opportunity to make a courtesy call on the Prime Minister and hold discussions with the concerned Ministers of the Government. The purpose of his visit appeared to be to get a feel as to whether India is willing for an early resumption of the Ministerial Conference and whether there is a likelihood of arriving at a broad consensus and convergence of views on the agenda items.

(c) It was conveyed to the DG, WTO that there was no point in rushing into another Ministerial Meeting of WTO unless there is a broad consensus among the Members, and that such a broad consensus could be arrived at if non-trade related issues are removed from the agenda and if there are reliable indications that the concerns of India and the developing countries regarding implementation of existing WTO Agreements would be redressed expeditiously. India's commitment to continue with the mandated negotiations and mandated reviews was also conveyed to the DG, WTO.

Reforms sought by India in the WTO

1054. SHRI CM. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has sought reforms in the WTO regime;

(b) if so, what are the details indicating the precise object sought to be achieved thereby;

(c) the moves made and the steps taken to secure such reforms; and

(d) what trade preferences enjoyed by developing countries under the CATT are being denied or diluted under the WTO regime?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) India has been seeking reforms in the WTO regime by way of redressal of the existing asymmetries and inequities in several of the WTO Agreements, and the non-realization of expected benefits from Agreements such as textiles and agriculture by the developing countries in general and India in particular. India has also effectively articulated the manner in which the special and differential treatment provisions of the WTO Agreements have remained virtually inoperative and how, even in areas where developing countries acquire competitiveness, antidumping or anti-subsidies investigations are initiated in increasing numbers by the developed countries to leny them market access. India has also resolutely opposed moves to introduce linkages between labour and trade or any further widening of the environmental window under WTO agreements, as this may result in disguised protectionism affecting the market access of developing countries. The major objective to be achieved through these efforts is to bring the development dimension to the forefront, in order that the multilateral trading system subserves the stated objective of the WTO Agreements of raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income and Effective demand, and expanding the production of trade in goods and services..."

(c) India has been following a two,pronged strategy! in this regard. On the one hand, a national consensus on various issues as were raised in the preparatory process of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference, has been evolved in consultations with the major stakeholders, including industry, national level political parties and trade unions, research institutions, trade experts and"civil society. On the other hand diplomatic initiatives were taken to garner support from like-minded countries, such as the SAARC, the G-15 Group comprising of seventeen countries and the G-77 Group of developing countries.

(d) During the earlier rounds of GATT, till the Kennedy Round, the developing countries were not expected to take on many of the obligations which developed on many of the developed countries. However, under the Uruguay Round which gave birth to the WTO, developing countries have taken on substantial obligations on trade in goods, services and Intellecutal Property Rights. The Special and Differential treatment provisions other than the provisions providing for a longer transition period or higher dimensions in favour of developing countries, as contained in most of the WTO Agreements, are only in the nature, of the "best endeavour' provisions and have not been

faithfully implemented as these "best endeavour' clauses cannot be enforced through the Dispute Settlement Mechanism of W.T.O.

Decline in Import

1055. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that imports dropped from US $ 4,778.8 million in 1997-98 to US $ 28,125.5 million in 1998-99; and

(b) if so, what has been the impact of this on our economic development and GDP?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) No, Sir. As per the provisional data available from Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), Calcutta for 1998-99, imports were valued at US $ 41886.63 million in 1998-99 against US $ 38807.40 million during 1997-98.

(b) Does not arise.

Export Growth

1056. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how do Government plan to increase the export growth by double digit percentage and by when; and

(b) if not, what is the percentage of growth, Government are planning for the next five years, year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The Government is striving to achieve a high export growth through various promotional measures being taken continuously as enumerated in the Exim Policy, multilateral and bilateral initiatives, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and various other measures taken from time to time in consultation with industry and business houses.

(b) Department of Commerce formulates export targets on an annual basis. For the year 1999-2000, an export growth of 11.3% has been targeted.